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**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

YEONG LEE,

Plaintiff,

vs.

EL METATE, INC.; and DOES 1 to 10,
Defendants.

Case No.:

COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE
RELIEF AND DAMAGES FOR DENIAL
OF CIVIL RIGHTS OF A DISABLED
PERSON IN VIOLATIONS OF

1. AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES
ACT, 42 U.S.C. §12131 et seq.;

2. CALIFORNIA'S UNRUH CIVIL
RIGHTS ACT;

3. CALIFORNIA'S DISABLED
PERSONS ACT;

4. CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY
CODE;

5. NEGLIGENCE

Plaintiff YEONG LEE ("Plaintiff") complains of Defendants EL METATE, INC.;
and DOES 1 to 10 ("Defendants") and alleges as follows:

PARTIES

1. Plaintiff is a California resident with a physical disability. Plaintiff is a
transfemoral amputee below both thighs and is substantially limited in her ability to walk.
Plaintiff requires the use of a wheelchair at all times when traveling in public.

1 2. Defendants are, or were at the time of the incident, the real property owners,
2 business operators, lessors and/or lessees of the real property for a restaurant
3 (“Business”) located at or about 1320 W. 1st St., Santa Ana, California.

4 3. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate or
5 otherwise of Defendant DOES 1 through 10, and each of them, are unknown to Plaintiff,
6 who therefore sues said Defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiff will ask leave of
7 Court to amend this Complaint when the true names and capacities have been
8 ascertained. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and, based thereon, alleges that each such
9 fictitiously named Defendants are responsible in some manner, and therefore, liable to
10 Plaintiff for the acts herein alleged.

11 4. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and thereon alleges that, at all relevant
12 times, each of the Defendants was the agent, employee, or alter-ego of each of the other
13 Defendants, and/or was acting in concert with each of the other Defendants, and in doing
14 the things alleged herein was acting with the knowledge and consent of the other
15 Defendants and within the course and scope of such agency or employment relationship.

16 5. Whenever and wherever reference is made in this Complaint to any act or
17 failure to act by a defendant or Defendants, such allegations and references shall also be
18 deemed to mean the acts and failures to act of each Defendant acting individually, jointly
19 and severally.

20 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

21 6. The Court has jurisdiction of this action pursuant to 28 USC §§ 1331 and
22 1343 for violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, (42 USC §12101, *et*
23 *seq.*).

24 7. Pursuant to pendant jurisdiction, attendant and related causes of action,
25 arising from the same nucleus of operating facts, are also brought under California law,
26 including, but not limited to, violations of California Civil Code §§51, 51.5, 52(a), 52.1,
27 54, 54., 54.3 and 55.

28 8. Plaintiff’s claims are authorized by 28 USC §§ 2201 and 2202.

1 9. Venue is proper in this court pursuant to 28 USC §1391(b). The real
2 property which is the subject of this action is located in this district, Orange County,
3 California, and that all actions complained of herein take place in this district.

4 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

5 10. In or about December of 2023, Plaintiff went to the Business.

6 11. The Business is a restaurant business establishment, open to the public, and
7 is a place of public accommodation that affects commerce through its operation.
8 Defendants provide parking spaces for customers.

9 12. While attempting to enter the Business during each visit, Plaintiff personally
10 encountered a number of barriers that interfered with her ability to use and enjoy the
11 goods, services, privileges, and accommodations offered at the Business.

12 13. To the extent of Plaintiff's personal knowledge, the barriers at the Business
13 included, but were not limited to, the following:

- 14 a. Defendants failed to comply with the federal and state standards for
15 the parking space designated for persons with disabilities. Defendants
16 failed to post required signage such as "Van Accessible," and
17 "Minimum Fine \$250".
- 18 b. Defendants failed to comply with the federal and state standards for
19 the parking space designated for persons with disabilities. Defendants
20 failed to provide an access aisle with level surface slope.
- 21 c. Defendants failed to comply with the federal and state standards for
22 the parking space designated for persons with disabilities. The height
23 of the posted required signages was lower than the height allowed by
24 the standards.

25 14. These barriers and conditions denied Plaintiff full and equal access to the
26 Business and caused Plaintiff difficulty and frustration. Plaintiff wishes to return and
27 patronize the Business; however, Plaintiff is deterred from visiting the Business because
28

1 her knowledge of these violations prevents her from returning until the barriers are
2 removed.

3 15. Based on the violations, Plaintiff alleges, on information and belief, that
4 there are additional barriers to accessibility at the Business after further site inspection.
5 Plaintiff seeks to have all barriers related to her disability remedied. *See Doran v. 7-*
6 *Eleven, Inc.* 524 F.3d 1034 (9th Cir. 2008).

7 16. In addition, Plaintiff alleges, on information and belief, that Defendants
8 knew that particular barriers render the Business inaccessible, violate state and federal
9 law, and interfere with access for the physically disabled.

10 17. At all relevant times, Defendants had and still have control and dominion
11 over the conditions at this location and had and still have the financial resources to
12 remove these barriers without much difficulty or expenses to make the Business
13 accessible to the physically disabled in compliance with ADDAG and Title 24
14 regulations. Defendants have not removed such barriers and have not modified the
15 Business to conform to accessibility regulations.

16 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

17 **VIOLATION OF THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990**

18 18. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each of the allegations in all prior
19 paragraphs in this complaint.

20 19. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (“ADA”), no individual
21 shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of
22 the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of
23 public accommodation by any person who owns, leases, or leases to, or operates a place
24 of public accommodation. *See* 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a).

25 20. Discrimination, *inter alia*, includes:

- 26 a. A failure to make reasonable modification in policies, practices, or
27 procedures, when such modifications are necessary to afford such
28 goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations

1 to individuals with disabilities, unless the entity can demonstrate that
2 making such modifications would fundamentally alter the nature of
3 such goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or
4 accommodations. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(ii).

5 b. A failure to take such steps as may be necessary to ensure that no
6 individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated or
7 otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the
8 absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the entity can
9 demonstrate that taking such steps would fundamentally alter the
10 nature of the good, service, facility, privilege, advantage, or
11 accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden. 42
12 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iii).

13 c. A failure to remove architectural barriers, and communication barriers
14 that are structural in nature, in existing facilities, and transportation
15 barriers in existing vehicles and rail passenger cars used by an
16 establishment for transporting individuals (not including barriers that
17 can only be removed through the retrofitting of vehicles or rail
18 passenger cars by the installation of a hydraulic or other lift), where
19 such removal is readily achievable. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(b)(2)(A)(iv).

20 d. A failure to make alterations in such a manner that, to the maximum
21 extent feasible, the altered portions of the facility are readily
22 accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, including
23 individuals who use wheelchairs or to ensure that, to the maximum
24 extent feasible, the path of travel to the altered area and the
25 bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving the altered
26 area, are readily accessible to and usable by individuals with
27 disabilities where such alterations to the path or travel or the
28 bathrooms, telephones, and drinking fountains serving the altered area

1 are not disproportionate to the overall alterations in terms of cost and
2 scope. 42 U.S.C. § 12183(a)(2).

3 21. Where parking spaces are provided, accessible parking spaces shall be
4 provided. 1991 ADA Standards § 4.1.2(5); 2010 ADA Standards § 208. One in every
5 eight accessible spaces, but not less than one, shall be served by an access aisle 96 in
6 (2440 mm) wide minimum and shall be designated “van accessible.” 1991 ADA
7 Standards § 4.1.2(5)(b). For every six or fraction of six parking spaces, at least one shall
8 be a van accessible parking space. 2010 ADA Standards § 208.2.4.

9 22. Under the ADA, the method and color of marking are to be addressed by
10 State or local laws or regulations. See 36 C.F.R., Part 1191. Under the California
11 Building Code (“CBC”), the parking space identification signs shall include the
12 International Symbol of Accessibility. Parking identification signs shall be reflectorized
13 with a minimum area of 70 square inches. Additional language or an additional sign
14 below the International Symbol of Accessibility shall state “Minimum Fine \$250.” A
15 parking space identification sign shall be permanently posted immediately adjacent and
16 visible from each parking space, shall be located with its centerline a maximum of 12
17 inches from the centerline of the parking space and may be posted on a wall at the
18 interior end of the parking space. See CBC § 11B-502.6, et seq.

19 23. Moreover, an additional sign shall be posted either in a conspicuous place at
20 each entrance to an off-street parking facility or immediately adjacent to on-site
21 accessible parking and visible from each parking space. The additional sign shall not be
22 less than 17 inches wide by 22 inches high. The additional sign shall clearly state in
23 letters with a minimum height of 1 inch the following: “Unauthorized vehicles parked in
24 designated accessible spaces not displaying distinguishing placards or special license
25 plates issued for persons with disabilities will be towed away at the owner’s expense...”
26 See CBC § 11B-502.8, et seq.

27 24. Here, Defendants failed to provide the signs stating, “Minimum Fine \$250”
28 and “Van Accessible.”

1 25. Under the 1991 Standards, parking spaces and access aisles must be level
2 with surface slopes not exceeding 1:50 (2%) in all directions. 1991 Standards § 4.6.2.
3 Accessible parking spaces shall be at least 96 in (2440 mm) wide. Parking access aisles
4 shall be part of an accessible route to the building or facility entrance and shall comply
5 with 4.3. Two accessible parking spaces may share a common access aisle. Parked
6 vehicle overhangs shall not reduce the clear width of an accessible route. Parking spaces
7 and access aisles shall be level with surface slopes not exceeding 1:50 (2%) in all
8 directions. 1991 Standards § 4.6.3.

9 26. Here, the access aisle is not level with the parking spaces. Under the 2010
10 Standards, access aisles shall be at the same level as the parking spaces they serve.
11 Changes in level are not permitted. 2010 Standards § 502.4. "Access aisles are required
12 to be nearly level in all directions to provide a surface for transfer to and from vehicles."
13 2010 Standards § 502.4 Advisory. Id. No more than a 1:48 slope is permitted.

14 27. Signs shall be 60 inches (1525 mm) minimum above the finish floor or
15 ground surface measured to the bottom of the sign. 2010 ADA Standards § 502.6.

16 28. Here, Defendants failed to post signage at the required minimum height of
17 60 inches above the finish floor or ground surface measured to the bottom of the sign.

18 29. A public accommodation shall maintain in operable working condition those
19 features of facilities and equipment that are required to be readily accessible to and usable
20 by persons with disabilities by the Act or this part. 28 C.F.R. 35.211(a).

21 30. By failing to maintain the facility to be readily accessible and usable by
22 Plaintiff, Defendants are in violation of Plaintiff's rights under the ADA and its related
23 regulations.

24 31. The Business has denied and continues to deny full and equal access to
25 Plaintiff and to other people with disabilities. Plaintiff has been and will continue to be
26 discriminated against due to the lack of accessible facilities, and therefore, seeks
27 injunctive relief to alter facilities to make such facilities readily accessible to and usable
28 by individuals with disabilities.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

VIOLATION OF THE UNRUH CIVIL RIGHTS ACT

32. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each of the allegations in all prior paragraphs in this complaint.

33. California Civil Code § 51 states, “All persons within the jurisdiction of this state are free and equal, and no matter what their sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation, citizenship, primary language, or immigration status are entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services in all business establishments of every kind whatsoever.”

34. California Civil Code § 52 states, “Whoever denies, aids or incites a denial, or make any discrimination or distinction contrary to Section 51, 51.5, or 51.6, is liable for each and every offense for the actual damages, and any amount that may be determined by a jury, or a court sitting without a jury, up to a maximum of three times the amount of actual damage but in no case less than four thousand dollars (\$4,000) and any attorney’s fees that may be determined by the court in addition thereto, suffered by any person denied the rights provided in Section 51, 51.5, or 51.6.

35. California Civil Code § 51(f) specifies, “a violation of the right of any individual under federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336) shall also constitute a violation of this section.”

36. The actions and omissions of Defendants alleged herein constitute a denial of full and equal accommodation, advantages, facilities, privileges, or services by physically disabled persons within the meaning of California Civil Code §§ 51 and 52. Defendants have discriminated against Plaintiff in violation of California Civil Code §§ 51 and 52.

37. The violations of the Unruh Civil Rights Act caused Plaintiff to experience difficulty, discomfort, or embarrassment. The Defendants are also liable for statutory damages as specified in California Civil Code §55.56(a)-(c).

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION

VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA DISABLED PERSONS ACT

38. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each of the allegations in all prior paragraphs in this complaint.

39. California Civil Code § 54.1(a) states, “Individuals with disabilities shall be entitled to full and equal access, as other members of the general public, to accommodations, advantages, facilities, medical facilities, including hospitals, clinics, and physicians’ offices, and privileges of all common carriers, airplanes, motor vehicles, railroad trains, motorbuses, streetcars, boats, or any other public conveyances or modes of transportation (whether private, public, franchised, licensed, contracted, or otherwise provided), telephone facilities, adoption agencies, private schools, hotels, loading places, places of public accommodations, amusement, or resort, and other places in which the general public is invited, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law, or state or federal regulation, and applicable alike to all persons.

40. California Civil Code § 54.3(a) states, “Any person or persons, firm or corporation who denies or interferes with admittance to or enjoyment of public facilities as specified in Sections 54 and 54.1 or otherwise interferes with the rights of an individual with a disability under Sections 54, 54.1 and 54.2 is liable for each offense for the actual damages, and any amount as may be determined by a jury, or a court sitting without a jury, up to a maximum of three times the amount of actual damages but in no case less than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) and any attorney’s fees that may be determined by the court in addition thereto, suffered by any person denied the rights provided in Section 54, 54.1, and 54.2.

41. California Civil Code § 54(d) specifies, “a violation of the right of an individual under Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-336) also constitute a violation of this section, and nothing in this section shall be construed to limit the access of any person in violation of that act.

42. The actions and omissions of Defendants alleged herein constitute a denial of full and equal accommodation, advantages, and facilities by physically disabled persons within the meaning of California Civil Code § 54. Defendants have discriminated against Plaintiff in violation of California Civil Code § 54.

43. The violations of the California Disabled Persons Act caused Plaintiff to experience difficulty, discomfort, and embarrassment. The Defendants are also liable for statutory damages as specified in California Civil Code §55.56(a)-(c).

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION

CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE § 19955, et seq.

44. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each of the allegations in all prior paragraphs in this complaint.

45. Plaintiff and other similar physically disabled persons who require the use of a wheelchair are unable to use public facilities on a “full and equal” basis unless each such facility is in compliance with the provisions of California Health & Safety Code § 19955 et seq. Plaintiff is a member of the public whose rights are protected by the provisions of California Health & Safety Code § 19955 et seq.

46. The purpose of California Health & Safety Code § 1995 et seq. is to ensure that public accommodations or facilities constructed in this state with private funds adhere to the provisions of Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 4450) of Division 5 of Title 1 of the Government Code. The code relating to such public accommodations also require that “when sanitary facilities are made available for the public, clients, or employees in these stations, centers, or buildings, they shall be made available for persons with disabilities.

47. Title II of the ADA holds as a “general rule” that no individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of goods (or use), services, facilities, privileges, and accommodations offered by any person who owns, operates, or leases a place of public accommodation. 42 U.S.C. § 12182(a). Further, each and every violation of the ADA also constitutes a separate and distinct

1 violation of California Civil Code §§ 54(c) and 54.1(d), thus independently justifying an
2 award of damages and injunctive relief pursuant to California law, including but not
3 limited to Civil Code § 54.3 and Business and Professions Code § 17200, et seq.

4 **FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION**

5 **NEGLIGENCE**

6 48. Plaintiff incorporates by reference each of the allegations in all prior
7 paragraphs in this complaint.

8 49. Defendants have a general duty and a duty under the ADA, Unruh Civil
9 Rights Act and California Disabled Persons Act to provide safe and accessible facilities
10 to the Plaintiff.

11 50. Defendants breached their duty of care by violating the provisions of ADA,
12 Unruh Civil Rights Act and California Disabled Persons Act.

13 51. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' negligent conduct, Plaintiff
14 has suffered damages.

15 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

16 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff respectfully prays for relief and judgment against
17 Defendants as follows:

18 1. For preliminary and permanent injunction directing Defendants to comply
19 with the Americans with Disability Act and the Unruh Civil Rights Act;

20 2. Award of all appropriate damages, including but not limited to statutory
21 damages, general damages and treble damages in amounts, according to proof;

22 3. Award of all reasonable restitution for Defendants' unfair competition
23 practices;

24 4. Reasonable attorney's fees, litigation expenses, and costs of suit in this
25 action;

26 5. Prejudgment interest pursuant to California Civil Code § 3291; and

27 6. Such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

28 //

DEMAND FOR TRIAL BY JURY

Pursuant to Rule 38(b) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Plaintiff hereby demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

Dated: March 6, 2024

SO. CAL. EQUAL ACCESS GROUP

By: /s/ Jason J. Kim
Jason J. Kim, Esq.
Attorneys for Plaintiff